

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for repairing railcars, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a railcar maintenance facility wherein the maintenance facility
5 comprises a plurality of maintenance stations and a transfer area;
providing a railcar requiring maintenance service;
moving the railcar to the transfer area;
transferring the railcar to at least one of the maintenance stations;
working on the railcar within the maintenance stations; and
10 moving the railcar out of the maintenance facility.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
inspecting the railcar for maintenance needs prior to moving the railcar to
the transfer area.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
15 holding a railcar within a queue area when a maintenance station is not
available.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
providing a plurality of repair stations within the maintenance facility; and
transferring the railcar to one of the repair stations.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
20 providing an inbound railway and an outbound railway;
moving the railcars into and out of the maintenance facility via the inbound
and outbound railways, respectively.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
25 removing a paint coating from an interior of the railcar within one of the
maintenance stations.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
removing a paint coating from an exterior of the railcar within one of the
maintenance stations.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

administering a lining to an interior of the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

curing the lining within a second maintenance station.

5 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
administering a coating of paint to an exterior of the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

curing the coating of paint within a second maintenance station.

10 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
disassembling the railcar to repair the railcar within a first maintenance station; and

reassembling the railcar after the railcar is repaired within a second maintenance station.

15 11. The method of claim 6 farther comprising the step of:
removing the paint coating by blasting the interior of the railcar with a scouring material.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the material is selected from the group consisting of metal grit, metal pellets, sand and water.

13. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
cleaning the railcar within one of the maintenance stations.

20 14. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
providing a transfer table for transferring the railcar through the maintenance facility; and

transferring the railcar between maintenance stations.

25 15. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
providing an inspection area connected to the inbound railway;
inspecting the railcar to determine the maintenance needs of the railcar; and
routing the railcar through the maintenance facility based on the maintenance needs.

30 16. The method of claim 1 wherein the transfer means comprises a plurality of transfer tables and further wherein the method comprises the step of:

transferring a plurality of railcars through the facility via the plurality of transfer tables.

5 17. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
providing an interior blast station for scouring an interior of the railcar;
providing a lining queue area connected to the transfer area; and
transferring the railcar to the lining queue area if the interior blast station is unavailable to receive the railcar.

10 18. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
providing a paint station connected to the transfer area;
providing a cure queue area connected to the transfer area; and
transferring the railcar to the cure queue area if the paint station is unavailable to receive the railcar.

15 19. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
providing a communication means at each maintenance station for
communicating whether the maintenance station is available to receive the railcar;
communicating to an operator via the communication means the availability
of the maintenance stations; and
transferring the railcar to a maintenance station that is available based on
the communication of the maintenance stations to the operator.

20 20. The ^{method} [process] of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
inspecting the railcar for maintenance needs; and
administering a designation to the railcar based on the maintenance needs of
the railcar.

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